

INSCOM civilian shows no mercy

by Spc. Leslie Pearson

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Leah Upshaw, chief information officer and contract oversight officer for the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade, has no problem holding her own on the racquetball court.

While the mother of three has enjoyed playing the sport for about 17 years, it was seizing the Women's A division title at the 2001 Georgia State Championships in Atlanta that wet her appetite for tournament competition. Since then, she's been winning pretty much every competition she enters.

"Racquetball is a great way to burn off energy, either positive or negative! When I come off the court, no matter how well I've played, I always feel great about the work out I just got," she said. "It was the single reason I started to play and it is still the number one reason I continue."

Shortly after winning the gold in the state championships, Upshaw participated in the U.S. Racquetball Association Regional Championships where she won first place in both divisions and qualified to compete in the National Championships. By this time, she was the United States Racquetball Association's number five ranking player in the nation in Women's A and the number one player in the Women's 35 and Over Division.

As an Air Force Reservist, Upshaw has represented the Air Force at the US Nationals, the highest level tournament in racquetball, and at the All Army Invitational. Without missing a beat, she also won the 2002 Women's Open in Atlanta, Ga.

Upshaw hasn't diverted from the high goals she's set for herself in the past; she will be competing at the US Open, a national level competition scheduled to be held in Memphis, Tenn. later this month. Additionally, she hopes to compete in a tournament co-sponsored by the Lady's Professional Racquetball and the US Armed Forces Invitational which will be in Hawaii.

"This may or may not happen," said Upshaw. "As far as my command and the Air Force reserves are concerned, they're ready to support it but we found out the Air Force has taken racquetball off their list of sponsored activities this year."

"Besides the US Nationals, this is one of the biggest tournaments for racquetball," she said. "It draws in the professional racquetball players in both the men's and the women's divisions. It's a really fun, exciting, high level racquetball tournament they have once a year."

Seeing someone play who she thinks is pretty good and then beating them in a match is a real motivation to keep her competing, she said.

"Of course sometimes you have to work up to that, to get to that next level and be competitive. But that's the personal challenge I take to myself. Practicing can be downright boring for me, but I've learned to practice as I play. I work on my game no matter what level of player I am up against so that when I make it to the next tournament, I might be a little bit more consistent with my shots or have a new or improved serve that just might give me an edge over my opponent," said Upshaw.